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ABSTRACT

The emergence of multicultural education as a national priority is discussed and its links with the bilingual education movement are examined, drawing on a variety of written sources. It is proposed that the push for multicultural curricula reflects a broader agenda than ethnic pride and consciousness-raising, and is an extension of the campaign for bilingual education in the face of dwindling evidence that bilingual education is effective. One of the dilemmas of multicultural education can be seen by the fact that negative characterizations or the absence of positive references to certain minorities can have a damaging effect on the psyche. The central dilemma of what is termed "multicultural" education is that: every culture has both positive and not so positive aspects. Treatment of cultures is seen as uneven in both the instructional materials being created and in public treatment of these issues. (MSE)

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# ENGLISH FIRST FOUNDATION

OUR SYMBOL IS THE STATUE OF LIBERTY TORCH, CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF IMMIGRANTS WHO LEARNED ENGLISH AND BECAME FULL MEMBERS OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

ED 384 212

## The Relationship Between Multicultural and Bilingual Education

**Americans share a common historical and cultural heritage in which racism has played and still plays a dominant role. Because of this shared experience, we also inevitably share many ideas, attitudes and beliefs that attach significance to an individual's race and induce negative feelings and opinions about nonwhites. To the extent that this cultural belief system has influenced all of us, we are all racists. At the same time, most of us are unaware of our racism.**[1]

Multiculturalism, long secondary in emphasis to the bilingual concept of education (even though both are required by federal law) has achieved a new status of late.

Once organized ethnic lobbies stopped using multiculturalism as a way to say that only members of their children's ethnic group were fit to teach their children, the National Education Association and its allies were able to become much more enthusiastic about the concept.

The NEA has specifically endorsed multicultural education as a positive good:

> The National Education Association believes that multicultural/global education is a way of helping every student perceive the cultural diversity of U.S. citizenry so that children of many races may develop pride in their own cultural legacy, awaken to the ideals embodied in the cultures of their neighbors, and develop an appreciation of the common humanity shared by all peoples of the earth. . . .
>
> The Association urges its affiliates to develop comprehensive teacher training programs for multicultural/global education and to work to secure legislation that would provide adequate funding for effective implementation of such programs."[2]

The NEA's endorsement of this concept is hardly recent. A 1969 NEA sponsored conference on "Ethnic Modification of the Curriculum" came up with suggestions along the same lines:

> Education must help the child have a good self-image in terms of his own culture. Our system has failed many pupils. They have no hopes (sic) for the future; they are born losers. They have no pride in themselves because they have no opportunity to learn about themselves and their culture. There is too much omission in terms of cultures other than white; the curriculum has been written with Anglo-American style and bias, rather than in a universal way.[3]

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> There were no doubts among the participants about the need for ethnic studies by all members of the society, particularly the nonmembers. As Dr. Drummond put it, "Maybe we need black history for whites more than we need it for blacks; maybe we need Chicano history for whites more than for Mexican Americans."[4]

There is a much broader agenda at work in the new push for multicultural curriculums than simple ethnic pride and consciousness raising. In some ways, multiculturalism is a continuation of the tired campaign for bilingual education.

Since bilingual education advocates are, like Diogenes, forced to search the world for something they are unlikely to find--some proof that bilingual education really works--their programs have become less likely to attract great new support.

The bilingual education iron triangle of Education Department bureaucrats; Congressmen with active ethnic constituencies who believe these programs are their just due and the teachers' union, teacher training program administrators and textbook publishers whose jobs depend on these programs, have proven they can stave off great changes in them. But Congress and most states rightly reject pouring vast new sums of taxpayer dollars down what has come to be considered an educational rathole.

For this reason, the search for new jobs, funds, and programs has turned to making multiculturalism the new buzzword of the 1990's.

It is important to realize that this issue has in some ways been part and parcel of the bilingual education crusade from the beginning. The idea that bilingual education required cultural maintenance was at least implicit in the original Bilingual Education Act of 1967-1968, and was made a part of the 1973-74 revision of that law.[5]

The linkage of bilingualism to biculturalism is to some extent understandable. Advocates of foreign language learning by English speakers as well as bilingual education, like Senator Paul Simon, suggest that to learn a language is to learn about a culture:

> Language is a key to opening minds and attitudes. To speak, read, write, and understand another language is the beginning of understanding other people.[6]

Similarly, according to at least some advocates of multiculturalism, it is difficult to study another culture without learning at least something about its language:

> For example, Norma Alarcon discussed the relationship between literary esthetics and bilingual issues: that is, how language choice influences literary paradigms through code-switching; genre-bending; the emergence of new speaking subjects; and texts that are written in English with Spanish accentuation and cadences.[7]

Advocates of "biculturalism" in the nation's taxpayer-funded schools have found ways to make their agenda sound relatively harmless. Consider this example of bicultural schooling suggested by a Hispanic writer:

> The bicultural approach . . . is based on the conviction that educational programs for children must support a child's self-esteem and pride in family, community, ethnic heritage and nationality. . . . (A)spects of cultural learning are viewed as integral parts of a child's everyday experience. Each child is

encouraged to express or "represent" the important elements of his or her own culture through ongoing program activities and use of classroom materials. For example, a child in this program might be asked to model a clay tortilla, then to pretend to prepare one, using a rolling pin, flour bag and stove in the dramatic play area, and, finally, to describe a tortilla or the process of making one to another person.[8]

Yet embedded in this harmless-sounding program remains the discredited principle that a child's self-esteem and later educational achievement depends upon his being taught first in a language other than English if he does not arrive at the schoolhouse steps speaking perfect English:

> Finally, the model's goal of biculturalism is reflected in and enhanced by its approach to language development, which gives first priority to extending and developing the child's home or primary language. . . . (S)econd language instruction usually follows activities that the child has participated in, using the first language as a base.[9]

Thus, the tortilla-baking Mexican child is first taught the names for everything he is doing in Spanish, and only later on is English introduced. The harmless-sounding bicultural program turns out to be another way to keep the bilingual teacher employed.

However, bi- or multiculturalism is more than another way of describing bilingual education. Multiculturalism in practice has become a glorification of every culture save one: the Judeo-Christian tradition of Western Europe.

The quest for inclusiveness in the school curriculum leaves no stone unturned, no matter how small. Consider the instructions a former illustrator of children's reading textbooks received for a single volume:

> It's etched in acid in my mind. They sent 10 pages of single-spaced specifications. The hero was a Hispanic boy. There were black twins, one boy, one girl; an overweight Oriental boy, and an American Indian girl. That leaves the Caucasian. Since we mustn't forget the physically handicapped, she was born with a congenital malformation and only had three fingers on one hand.
>
> One child had to have an Irish setter, and the setter was to be female.
>
> The Hispanic kid had two parents. The father has a white-collar job. The mother is an illustrator and she works at home. At one point, they are seen through the kitchen screen door making dinner, having spaghetti and meatballs and a salad. The editor appended a note that said, "Make sure its not iceberg; it should be something nice like endive."
>
> They also had a senior citizen, and I had to show her jogging.[10]

New York City's Board of Education recently issued a resource guide of its own along the same lines, "Promoting Bias-Free Curriculum Materials." As Gerald Sirkin describes it:

> Masculine terms like "forefathers" are to be expunged from the school vocabulary. There shall be no reference to "tribes" but to "nation/people." Chief Sitting Bull is hereafter to be called "Totanka Iotanka." King Phillip, an Indian prominent in the French and Indian War, is to be called "Metacome."

In pictures, males are not to be depicted as larger than females.[11]

The author of "Anti-Bias Curriculums: Tools for Empowering Young Children," Louise Derman-Sparks, even managed with some effort to find a racist message in a 1956 children's book:

> Think of the popular children's book, Harry the Dirty Dog, in which a white dog falls into a coal bin and became all black, i.e. dirty. His family doesn't recognize him until he gets washed and reemerges as the dog they love--white.[12]

Despite this near microscopic attention to the balancing of every detail, advocates of multiculturalism have found the nation's textbooks wanting. Their complaints found expression in a July 11, 1989 report commissioned by the New York State Board of Regents. This report, A Curriculum of Inclusion, is one of the most thoroughgoing expositions of what a multicultural classroom might be expected to teach.

In the first paragraph of the report's executive summary, the true dilemma of multicultural education is inadvertently presented:

> Negative characterizations or the absence of positive references have a terribly damaging effect on the psyche of young people of African, Asian, Latino, and Native American descent, and an equally damaging, though different, effect on young people of European American descent.[13]

The central dilemma of what is termed "multicultural" education is this: every culture has both positive and not so positive aspects.

Jack D. Forbes of the University of California at Davis produced a 1973 book on the Chicano heritage which devotes 53 pages to what he calls the religion of Mexico before the Spanish conquest. This section of his book refers to the Aztecs as "a remarkable people who . . . became masters of the arts of architecture, city planning, and government."[14]

The main shortcoming of this remarkable people, Forbes adds, is that "They were however, culturally or politically unable to accept the Mexican religion in its highest form. Instead they assimilated the Tolteca popular religion, already corrupted by Chichimeca influence, and emphasized the cult of human sacrifice."[15]

Note carefully how what we today would consider moral barbarism is treated as if it were merely a minor flaw in an otherwise admirable people. A history textbook that sang the praises of Nazi Germany save for a brief mention of the Holocaust would hardly be welcome in a public school classroom and rightly so.

Contrary to Mr. Forbes' soft peddling of the subject, human sacrifice was a fundamental part of the bloody rule of the Aztec Empire in the days before the Spanish conquest, as historian Jon M. White revealed two years before Mr. Forbes's book was printed:

> In months when rain was sought, a band of children were drowned, or walled up in a cave, or exposed on a mountain-top; and the more they wept, the better the augury for rain. . . . At the periods when growth and fertility were required, the commonest practice was to behead a priestess and flay her, and for a priest to insert himself into the skin and lead a ritual dance.
>
> When we visit or study photographs of Aztec temples, we should

> picture to ourselves those tall staircases as they frequently appeared: covered from top to bottom with a tacky, crimson sheath of blood.[16]

Should a teacher praise Aztec virtues while glossing over their vices in the name of multiculturalism? Is an honest discussion of their religious practices going to be seen as a "negative characterization" by the New York Board of Regents?

If some of the contributors to the report are taken at their word, the only time this sort of honest facing of both positive and negative is to be allowed in class is when the topic is white, European history. One of the four reviewers of New York State textbooks for the Task Force on Minorities found the seventh to eighth grade social studies program quite wanting in this area:

> . . . Section IV: European Conceptions of the World in 1500 is not satisfactory. It fails to reflect the conflict, chaos, and war which characterized Europe after the Crusades and the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. This situation in Europe contributed directly to the development of negative values and policies that produced aggressive individuals and nations that were ready to 'discover, invade and conquer' foreign land because of greed, racism and national egotism.[17]

In fact, the four consultants to the project were specifically charged by the Task Force:

> (A)ttention should be paid to whether prominent figures from the various minority groups are presented in full dimension as opposed to being presented in such a way that only those aspects of their lives more or less readily acceptable to the dominant culture are apparent.(emphasis added)[18]

If the worth of a fact is to be its unacceptance among the majority, two more problems arise.

First, what balance should be struck in presenting facts which the majority culture is not enthusiastic about versus facts which the minority culture may find equally offensive? The Reverend Ralph David Abernathy, a veteran civil rights activist, was heavily criticized by other black civil rights activists after his book, And the Walls Came Tumbling Down, stated that Reverend Martin Luther King entertained two women and struck a third the night before he died.[19] His own wife was elsewhere that evening. A high school teacher merely includes Rev. Abernathy's book on a supplemental reading list should not expect unanimous praise for his attempt to present Rev. King in "full dimension."

Second, at what grade level are these "unacceptable" facts to be taught about which leaders? Richard Hofstadter's famous work, The American Political Tradition, provides more rounded portraits of American presidents whom elementary schoolchildren are basically taught to view uncritically. Abraham Lincoln for example, was no different than politicians of his time or ours. While he told a Chicago, Illinois audience on July 10, 1858:

> Let us unite . . . unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal.[20]

His remarks took a differnet tone on September 18, 1858 in Charleston, SC:

> I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races.[21]

Are these unedifying facts to be dwelt on at length in early grades while leaders of minority culture are presented in a far less critical manner? The Report suggests that this is precisely what its writers have in mind:

> (M)embers of minority cultures are alienated and devalued, members of the majority culture are exclusionary and over-valued.[22]

More specifically:

> . . . African American, Asian American, Puerto Rican/Latino, and Native American children (because of ego starvation and negative socialization) have special needs that can be more meaningfully met by positive images and cultural experiences.[23]

These positive images need not be cluttered unduly with negative data, as Professor Jefferies proved in his uncritical review of a unit on Central American history:

> Several major Native American (indigenous) civilizations were cited for further detailed study. They included the Aztecs, the Mayas, the Incas and the Pueblo civilizations, each one of which developed a marvelous adaptation to its environment and ecology. . . . It also noted under Major Ideas that "the use of technology by the Native American Indian civilizations was often less destructive to the environment.[24]

That the Aztecs tore the hearts out of hundreds of thousands of other indigenous peoples of Central America who had the misfortune to lose to them in battle is certainly an adaptation to the environment, but a marvelous one? And there are those who believe that the disappearance of the Mayan civilization was caused by ecological errors on the part of that people.

Building of selectively positive images in the minds of children fortunate enough to belong to the approved minorities is hardly the way to build respect for all cultures by all students, particularly when disputed theories are to be introduced as fact, while certain established facts are omitted altogether.

Professor Jefferies feels that the social studies program syllabus for grades 7-12 gives the African continent short shrift. In particular,

> The unit on Africa . . . fails to clearly outline the significance of the continent to the world. The latest scientific evidence has established Africa as the birthplace of humanity and its earliest cradle of civilization. The history of the Africans of the Nile Valley is an essential ingredient needed to understand early civilizations and culture. The African factor is crucial in world history and the Nile Valley is fundamental to appreciating its significance. As a result, the fact that the Nile Valley was made invisible and removed from Africa shows how strongly the Eurocentric tradition is still held.[25]

What Professor Jefferies demanded was that New York State officially recognize an extremely controversial new theory. As Asa G. Hilliard III, a Georgia State University psychologist has put it: "Egypt was a black African society."[26] Cornell University professor Martin Bernal has gone on to argue that this society "contributed greatly to the Greek civilization that many, especially Americans of European ancestry, view as the foundation of Western culture" but "European scholars . . . discounted the Afroasiatic roots of Western civilization."[27]

This particular reinterpretation of history, while controversial, is such an emotional issue that a Howard University classicist told a reporter, "You won't find an Egyptologist to discuss it."[28] But William H. McNeill, professor emeritus of history at the University of Chicago was willing to be interviewed by another reporter. His reaction to the "Black Egypt" theory?

> Absurd. They were not African in the sense of being black Africans, and there's no question about it. There are some kinds of black historians who need a glorious past of their own and find the history of Africa difficult . . . because they were civilizations of a secondary sort, on the fringes of the Moslem world. You don't have the vainglories of the centrality of a China or Europe or Middle East or India and they feel terribly naked without it, so they want to rewrite history.[29]

Frank Yurco, an Egyptologist at the University of Chicago and the Field Museum is equally dubious about the theory, if less caustic in his rebuttal:

> When you talk about Egypt, it's just not right to talk about black or white. That's all just American terminology and it serves American purposes. I can understand and sympathize with the desires of Afro-Americans to affiliate themselves with Egypt. But it isn't that simple. . . . To take the terminology here (in the United States) and graft it onto Africa is anthropologically inaccurate.[30]

Yet this view has already been incorporated in the new Afrocentric curriculum in Portland, Oregon. As the city's coordinator of multicultural, multiethnic education, Carolyn Leonard, explained to the New York Times, that "in teaching mathematical theory, instructors can mention that while the Pythagorean theorem is named after a Greek, he, like many other scholars of his time, studied in Africa, which was a great seat of learning."[31] Alexandria, Egypt and its great library is credited to the entire continent in this way.

One analyst on the New York State Task Force voiced some unexpected criticism of materials which purported to cover Native American culture:

> Every effort should be made to eliminate the strong words of bias that are directed toward Whites and Christians. This is in effect racism directed toward many Christian Iroquois people. The guide should be objective to the degree that the students and teachers can develop their views based on accurate information. No culture has a monopoly on perfection.[32]

This is hardly a view that the Task Force expected to hear. The more accustomed view is that any discussion of the relations of European immigrants to the native American population can hardly be anti-European and anti-Christian enough. The Council on Interracial Books for Children's view is quite representative:

> (T)he council points to a passage from one of the more naive of the texts -- America: Its People and Values, by Leonard C. Wood, Ralph H. Gabriel, and Edward L. Biller. The passage reads:
>
> > A friendly Indian named Squanto helped the colonists. He showed them how to plant corn and how to live on the edge of the wilderness. A soldier, Captain Miles Standish, taught the Pilgrims how to defend themselves against unfriendly Indians.

> The council's objection to this passage is that it is Eurocentric to characterize native Americans as either 'friendly' or 'unfriendly.' Squanto was actually assisting invaders, whereas the 'unfriendly' Indians were defending their communities. 'All nations define a 'patriot' as one whose alliance is toward his or her own people,' the council report continues. 'Consequently, true Native American heroes are those who fought to preserve and protect their land.[33]

Frances FitzGerald, whose previous book, Fire in the Lake, suggested that America's intervention in Viet Nam was doomed for failing to appreciate the culture of the Vietnamese people, can hardly be characterized as a bigot. Her views on what a truly multicultural American Indian curriculum would be forced to include if groups like the Council on Interracial Books for Children had its way is worth repeating:

> To begin with, if the texts were really to consider American history from the perspective of the American Indians, they would have to conclude that the continent had passed through almost five hundred years of unmitigated disaster, beginning with the epidemics spread by the Europeans and continuing on most fronts today.[34]

The multicultural perspective on American Indians runs into trouble not only when the subject is history. Indian religion can present an even more thorny problem.

The view of the National Education Association on the place of religion in the public school classroom is succinctly expressed in resolution H-6 of its official handbook:

> The Association opposes the imposition of sectarian practices in the public school program and urges its affiliates to do the same.[35]

The term "sectarian practices" has been interpreted rather broadly in some quarters--so broadly that Norman Lear, the founder of the organization to combat the influence of conservative Christians in politics that styled itself as People for the American Way, was moved to comment:

> "Among secularists," he said, "the aversion toward discussing moral values, let alone religious, can reach absurd extremes."
>
> He cited a high school guidance counselor who refused to tell students whether they would be morally obligated to return a wallet with $1,000. The counselor "reportedly said he didn't want to impose his values on his students," Mr. Lear said.[36]

Yet advocates of American Indian cultural education demand that the public schools not only adapt themselves to Indian religion (unless it is Indian Christianity) but instruct students in its beliefs as well:

> Discrimination against persons because of their beliefs is the most insidious kind of injustice. Ridicule of one's spiritual beliefs or cultural teachings wounds the spirit, leaving anger that may be masked by a proud silence. American Indians experience this discrimination in abundance for the sake of their traditional beliefs, especially when such beliefs conflict with those of the dominant culture's education system.[37]

This particular author argued that schools should accept all Indian religious beliefs without question or risk being considered culturally insensitive:

> In the schools, misunderstandings frequently arise because of the school system's definition of "sickness" and the Indian concept of unwellness. Schools may have a list of physical symptoms for which students are automatically sent home: for instance, fever, upset stomach, headache, vomiting, and other obvious symptoms of distress. These physical symptoms are not cause for alarm in most Indian families . . . As a result, Indian parents may be labeled by the school authorities as uncaring, irresponsible, ignorant, or lazy when they send their children to school with a runny nose or a cough, when in fact those symptoms are so common in their culture that they are not considered evidence of illness. In contrast, a child may be kept home several days for traditional treatments for "ghost sickness," a malady of lethargy, apathy, and general nonspecific unwellness caused by the spirits of dead relatives calling for the child to join them. The child may face punishment for his or her absence upon returning to school, since the school's list of excusable illnesses does not include "ghost sickness" . . .[38]

If the school summoned parents for a conference, that too could be a violation of Indian religious rights:

> Avoiding disharmony is desirable in Indian cultures: disharmony is negative and pervasive and can result in unwellness. For instance, Indian parents frequently refuse to go to the school when called, because they have learned that being called means their child is in trouble. The negative situation that is certain to develop among school officials, the child, and the parents brings disharmony for all concerned and can result in illness if spiritual energy becomes low.[39]

This author states that "non-Indians must be educated to the traditional beliefs that Indian people may have before they can understand what changes may be needed."[40] Imagine the reaction of parents in a school district that taught the children in a class about Indian "spirit traveling":

> (M)any tribal customs revolve around the belief that the body and spirit need not be in the same place at all times. What non-Indians perceive as inattention, "spacing out," or perhaps a petit mal seizure may be a matter of "spirit traveling for the Indians." . . . "Spirit traveling" refers to the spirit traveling to another location, assessing the activities and/or situation there . . . and the traveler being able to give an account of the information gained during the travel. . . . Some tribal groups seem to possess the unique ability to "travel in their spirit bodies," or to manifest themselves in bodily form in another location, as part of a projected consciousness. This ability of bilocation may create frustration for teachers, whose Indian students may leave the physical body sitting at a desk in the classroom while their consciousness and spirit bodies go elsewhere.[41]

Parents who are devotees of New Age philosophies so well publicized by the actress Shirley Maclaine will be less likely to object to a classroom lesson along these lines than will parents whose religious beliefs run in more traditional paths.

Other advocates of Indian culture in the classroom have criticized public schools for disrespecting Indian culture by encouraging competitions to answer questions quickly or even by serving milk to Indian children.[42]

Clearly, a multicultural approach to American Indian history and religion is an open-

ended invitation to vehement controversy in the community at large, a controversy not limited to disgruntled Anglo-Saxons. When the Omaha, Nebraska World-Herald attempted to print a series of articles on Nebraska history, outraged American Indians forced its cancellation because of its "implication that their ancestors were bloodthirsty savages."[43]

The New York State multicultural education study also discussed the particular problem of teaching what it termed "Latino" culture. The consultant on this issue warned early on that it would not be easy:

> (I)t is important to warn about the current tendency to group all Latinos (Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Mexican-Americans, Cubans, Central Americans and South Americans) into a descriptive classification of "Hispanics" -- an ethnic category which presumes a homogeneity for all Spanish-surnamed individuals. Such an approach tends to distort or mute significant differences -- historical, social, political and economic -- among the different groups.[44]

Well-meaning multicultural programs have run into this problem. A five-page essay on Puerto Rico distributed as one of 14 essays on ethnic groups issued in booklet form by the Philadelphia school district listed "a wide assortment of dances, foods, celebrities, and customs as Puerto Rican when, in fact, they belong to Mexico and other countries."[45]

Later, the consultant explained just what he had in mind in criticizing the social studies curriculum for grades 9 & 10:

> (T)here is a need for a more comprehensive presentation of the cases of Cuba and the Dominican Republic. We must not forget that the Cubans and the Dominicans are the main Latino groups in the U.S. after the Chicanos and the Puerto Ricans. . . The case of Puerto Rico, needless to say, should receive more attention.[46]

This line of reasoning demonstrates the other major flaw in the multicultural education movement: trying to please everybody in the course of a limited school day.

This particular consultant feels that the four largest Hispanic populations each deserve separate study. Children from Nicaragua, El Salvador or Guatemala will wonder, with good reason, why the Dominican Republic history is considered crucial while the history of their ancestors is not.

At the same time, the groups which are given the honor of curriculum inclusion will always be able to complain, with equal justification, that their history is given insufficient study. A history of the United States and the Western Hemisphere must cover a lot of ground as it is. Will one week on each of the "big four" Hispanic groups be seen as merely patronizing? Will a month on each lead to complaints that, say, black history is being unduly compressed as a result? Probably so.

The Latino studies section also reminds us that it is hard to omit religion from this discussion either, even though the context is quite different. A course outline for "Obstacles to Change that persist in the Independent Nations" lists the main obstacles as "the native aristocracy, the military, the Roman Catholic Church, and regional disparities"(emphasis added).[47]

This statement is criticized not for insulting the religion of at least some students likely to be present, but for failing to blame the United States as well.[48] While the American Indian portion of the "ideal" multicultural curriculum is to treat the religions of

some Indians with great respect, the Hispanic portion is to hold the religion of some Hispanics to criticism and scorn. And both are done in the name of building greater tolerance.

Diane Ravitch, a Columbia University professor of history and education who was asked to critique the Task Force's Curriculum of Inclusion report, noted two fundamental flaws in it: one of process and one of emphasis. She noted that to read the report was to think that the students in New York State classrooms would hardly hear of a non-Western European concept in class. Actually,

> (E)qual time is given to Africa, Latin America and Western Europe in the ninth and tenth grade "global studies" courses. Nevertheless, the report insists that the entire curriculum is "Eurocentric."[49]

Of course, it all depends on your point of view. Some people can look at an algebra book and see math problems. Others look at the same book and see a missed opportunity to drive home their views. As the Task Force put it:

> (N)o topic is truly culture-free and that by ostensibly omitting cultural references from science and mathematics materials, a subtle message is given to all children that all science and mathematics originated within the European culture. Thus, there is a clear need to include in the science and mathematical curricular materials references to the many contributions made by people from a variety of cultures.[50]

Evidently, these references are to be far more than passing:

> Information about African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans is generally perceived as additive or supplemental even by many teachers who genuinely believe it is needed in the curriculum. Too few education professionals, however, are committed to make this information a focal point of teaching content, major ideas, and student activities(emphasis added).[51]

Professor Ravitch's other insight, justified to some degree by the demand for multicultural math books, was this:

> The "Curriculum of Inclusion" never considers what we have in common. It never suggests that there are bonds that draw together people of all colors and religions and ethnic origins into a common nationality. It assumes that children will think well of themselves only by identifying with the foreign cultures of their ancestors, not by developing a positive commitment to the culture they now live in. . . . Racial pride can easily turn into racism.[52]

Professor Ravitch warned on another occasion that the United States should not begin traveling down the Orwellian road in which history and knowledge will "depend on who is in power."[53]

This is hardly alarmism on her part. Miguel Perez told Spanish readers of the New York Daily News that:

> Latinos will be the biggest U.S. minority by the year 2000 . . . If they try to tell you that this false 'American' history will not be corrected, tell them that soon we will have enough people and political power to make sure that all North American children are taught the complete history of the U.S.[54]

In the wake of public outcry across the state, New York State Commissioner of Education, Thomas Sobol, agreed that the tone of A Curriculum of Inclusion was "inflammatory", even though he had submitted the report to the Board of Regents without so much as a single word of criticism in his cover memo on July 11, 1989.[55] Commissioner Sobol later described the report as "purely advisory," and that he had "disagreements" with some of the conclusions, but refused to cite specifics since it would "not be helpful to do so."[56]

On February 16, 1990, the New York State Board of Regents voted unanimously to direct Commissioner Sobol to prepare a detailed study of potential curriculum revisions, a process that could take two years.[57]

Even should the new New York State curriculum meet every conceivable objection of its content from the various ethnic lobbies, that is unlikely to end the issue. Their latest argument is that everyone is a racist, particularly those who think they are not, and thus requires reeducation. Consider the views of Charles Lawrence, III, Professor of Law at Stanford University, as expressed in a recent article for that university's law review:

> Americans share a common historical and cultural heritage in which racism has played and still plays a dominant role. . . . To the extent that this cultural belief system has influenced all of us, we are all racists. At the same time, most of us are unaware of our racism. We do not recognize the ways in which our cultural experience has influenced our beliefs about race or the occasions on which those beliefs affect our actions. In other words, a large part of the behavior that produces racial discrimination is influenced by unconscious racial motivation.[58]

This unconscious but all pervasive racism is so effective that "by 4 or 5 years of age, most children have internalized society's norms, stereotypes and biases about sex, race and disability to an alarming degree."[59] By this way of thinking, the classroom teacher is required to have the sensitivity of a paranoid to avoid tolerating "bias":

> Researchers conclude that active intervention is necessary if children are to develop positive attitudes about people of different races and physical abilities. Contact with children of various backgrounds is not enough; it can even exacerbate mildly negative feelings(emphasis in original).[60]

What forms might this active intervention take?

Colorblindness, or an emphasis on what unites Americans, they agree, is insufficient at best and biased at worst:

> Isn't it better to emphasize the positive (how we are all the same) rather than the negative (how we differ)? Such questions are often rooted in a 'colorblind' or 'color-denial' philosophy of how to deal with race differences. Originally a progressive argument against the form of bigotry that ranks racial differences and puts 'white' first, colorblindness is nevertheless oblivious to what children can see for themselves and what people of color experience every day. It establishes the white experience as the norm and the differences in others' experiences as unimportant. It promotes tokenism and a denial of identity.[61]

Even a multicultural curriculum may not be enough:

> The intent of the multicultural approach is positive: Let's teach children about each other's cultures, so they will learn to respect each other and not develop prejudice. The danger is that such an approach easily deteriorates into what can be called a tourist curriculum. Such a curriculum is likely to teach about another culture through celebrations, holiday foods and the like, and to do it separately from the ongoing daily curriculum. . . . (T)he tourist curriculum is both patronizing, emphasizing the "exotic" differences between cultures, and trivializing, dealing not with the real-life daily problems and experiences of other peoples but with the surface aspects of their lives. It also suggests that people of a particular culture are all the same.[62]

The "active intervention" that is demanded is referred to as an "anti-bias curriculum." This concept is something that some of the writers for A Curriculum of Inclusion exemplify but do not express.

This "anti-bias" curriculum "stress(es) the importance of multi-cultural awareness for children in all-white classrooms even more than for mixed groups."[63] (Political realities, though, usually ensure that these programs are put in place in public schools which are by no means all white much more quickly. New York City, for example, has adopted this approach in a new $1 million curriculum for its public schools, 80% of whose students are either black or Hispanic.)[64]

Instead of being colorblind, Johns Hopkins University psychologist Robert Slavin urges teachers and administrators to be acutely aware of race, color and sex in every program:

> If 90 percent of the kids suspended are black or Hispanic, or all the kids on the student council are Oriental or white, you need to bring that fact into the open before you can deal with it. . . . You need to pay careful attention to issues of equity. If it's a school, for instance, you need to be sure the cheerleading squad and student council are racially mixed in a way that represents the student body, even if that means a certain proportion are appointed.[65]

This anti-bias effort includes putting students in four or five member learning teams in which each team reflects the ethnic mix of the school and then, while testing each student individually, giving "a score or other recognition of its work as a unit."[66] And if, say, white children dominate the groups, that can be stopped too, suggests University of Pittsburgh psychologist, Janet Schofield:

> Even in cooperative groups, students may still carry biases into the sessions. Blacks may expect that the whites will dominate, for instance. Sometimes you can combat these attitudes by giving minority kids a head start on a lesson, and having them teach it to the white children.[67]

This massive effort is already being undertaken in places like New York City despite little evidence that they will accomplish their intended goal of a more tolerant and peaceful society. "Experts say that few national studies have been conducted to determine how effective school programs to teach children racial tolerance have been."[68]

Here the parallel to the history of the bilingual education movement becomes even more compelling. Bilingual education was made an official policy of the federal government in 1968 despite little evidence in its favor because something needed to be done. That "something" has grown to a multi-million dollar part of the federal budget, zealously protected by its beneficiaries, even though its record is largely one of failure.

Bilingual education has had virtually no effect on the drop-out rate of the Hispanic children it was originally designed to help. A generation has been lost.

But if the "multicultural" or "anti-bias" curriculum experiment, launched with roughly as much evidence in its favor as bilingual education had at its beginning, the potential consequences are even more catastrophic. What if the anti-bias curriculum causes more, rather than less, race hatred?

This is hardly unlikely. A nine year old black son of a welfare mother who is told repeatedly that white people are in some fashion the cause of his family's misery is hardly likely to leave at the end of the day thinking better of his white classmates. A Hispanic daughter of a poor migrant worker is just as likely to hate whites more rather than less after a series of history lessons on the Mexican-American War in which the American victory is portrayed as an unprovoked effort to steal the land of her ancestors.

And, as Thomas Sowell reminds us, does anyone think that at least some majority group students will not react as other members of non-preferred groups in other nations have when certain positions on the student council or the cheerleading squad are reserved for members of preferred groups?

> Where certain opportunities are rigidly 'set aside' for particular groups, in the sense that members of other groups cannot have them, even if these opportunities remain unused, then there is the potential for a maximum of grievance for a minimum of benefit transfer. Admission to medical school in India's state of Gujarat operates on this principle--and has led repeatedly to bloody riots in which many people have died.[69]

Those who may believe that a few appointments to the student council to balance its ethnicity after the election is over will hardly be seen as a "reservation" for certain groups should realize that every election has losers as well as winners. And any sort of preferential policy, as societies all over the world have demonstrated, have the same consequences:

> Group polarization has tended to increase in the wake of preferential programs, with non-preferred groups reacting adversely, in ways ranging from political backlash to mob violence to civil war.[70]

The multiculturalist approach is the coming issue of the 1990's and deserves serious attention. The outcome of this debate may well determine whether the United States can continue to be an example to the world of "E Pluribus Unum" or be torn assunder by bloody, multinational conflicts, like the Balkan reigons of Europe or Southern Africa.

## Notes

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